29: Jenness E-5 (1914-1916) 1959
ND8 Copper Eskimo ND8

123 We lingered a few minutes only, but I visited him again in the evening, when he had the stage all set for
272 my reception. The hut was thronged with hunters
415 sipping oily tea from two small china cups. Over the blubber-lamp hung an iron cauldron from which Knife dipped up the evil-looking beverage with a greasy
123 ladle of musk-ox horn. Some of his treasures lay
177 beside him, dragged out of bags and boxes for my edification. There were two rifles, a Hollis double-barrelled fowling-piece, a pipe, plug tobacco, and part of an American magazine; strangest of all, a Roman breviary and an illustrated French Scripture book.

177 How, and where, had he obtained these last? Hanbury, the English explorer who passed through this country twelve years before, had certainly not carried them on his sled. Captain Bernard might have brought some of them on his vessel when he wintered in 1910 near the mouth of the Coppermine River; but surely he had no Roman breviary or French Scripture book? How did they come into the possession of the Eskimos?

797 I questioned Knife. The previous summer, he said,
177 he and his kinsmen had traded with three white men near Great Bear Lake. One of the white men, who wore a robe and a crucifix, was especially friendly, and when Knife and his companions secured him a supply of fresh meat, rewarded them with many presents, among them the rifles and the books.

29: Jenness E-5 (1914-1916) 1959
ND8 Copper Eskimo ND8

797
177

Knife's answer seemed plausible enough at the moment, and I made no further enquiries. Later I began to doubt his story, for what priest would give his Latin breviary to a savage? Palaiyak then told me, too, that he had seen a cassock and a crucifix in another hut. There must have been foul play somewhere. Had the Eskimos robbed the missionary? Had they murdered him?

I questioned Knife again a few weeks later, but he merely repeated the same story. A corporal of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police attached himself to our party the next autumn, and the following spring an inspector brought in a patrol from Great Bear Lake. Then the grim story came gradually to light.

* * *

797
609

Two French missionaries, Fathers Rouvier and LeRoux, passed through Great Bear Lake in the summer of 1912, charged with the establishment of a mission among the pagan inhabitants of Coronation Gulf. They began their ministrations on the Dismal Lakes, whither a few Eskimo families drifted in search of caribou; but the Eskimos vanished to the northward with the coming of the first snows, and the priests were left in solitude all winter. The natives visited them again the following summer, and the priests, determined not to lose sight of them, accompanied them to the coast. Trouble arose almost immediately. The

29: Jenness E-5 (1914-1916) 1959
ND8 Copper Eskimo ND8

797
609

Eskimo with whom they lodged coveted one of their rifles, and became openly hostile when they refused to part with it. His kinsmen supported him; other natives took the side of the two missionaries, and the camp was divided against itself. One of the elder men advised the missionaries to depart; he lent them one of his dogs, helped to load up their sled, and himself escorted them for the first two miles until the danger seemed over. Then he returned to the settlement, and the priests continued their way alone up the Coppermine River.

Two hunters who left the settlement the next day followed their trail up the river. Years later they declared that they went to help some kinsmen who had not yet descended to the coast. Whatever their real purpose, they overtook the priests not far from the ill-omened Bloody Fall, and agreed to haul their sled as far as the first timber in return for a few fox-traps. All day they pulled ahead of the dogs, and at evening built two snow-houses, one for themselves and one for the priests. Both parties spent the night in misery, for their clothing was damp with perspiration, and they had no fuel to mitigate the intense cold. They struggled ahead in the morning in the face of a blinding snow-storm, which drove them out of their course. The Eskimos, not accustomed to work for others and weary of the heavy hauling, wanted to abandon the priests; but the latter dared not let them depart,

29: Jenness E-5 (1914-1916) 1959
ND8 Copper Eskimo ND8

knowing that without aid they themselves could never reach the timber. One priest went in front to break the trail, the other marched behind the sled, threatening the natives with his rifle whenever they halted or turned back. The terrified Eskimos plotted to kill them and watched for an opportunity. When the priest behind them slackened his guard for a moment they leaped upon him with their knives, stabbed him to death, and shot his companion with the rifle. Then they cut open the bodies of their victims and ate the livers, a gruesome custom general among nearly all Eskimo tribes to render the spirits of the dead innocuous.

The hunters now returned and reported their crime to the people at the mouth of the river, who ascended to the scene of the murders and plundered the sled. Knife was not present on this occasion, but the following summer, while we were establishing our base at Bernard Harbour, he and his kinsmen pillaged the missionaries' cabin at the Dismal Lakes. Several Eskimos in this village that Johansen and I were visiting held property belonging to the priests, and the ringleader of the two murderers actually entertained us in his house. Strangely enough, we were greatly impressed by his bearing, and considered him one of the most enterprising and reliable natives that we had yet encountered.

Police arrested the two murderers about eighteen

29: Jenness E-5 (1914-1916) 1959
ND8 Copper Eskimo ND8

797 609 648 months after my visit and carried them south for trial. Both men were sentenced to death, but the penalty was later commuted to two years' imprisonment. They were ultimately restored to their homes, where one of them, profiting by his experience of civilization, rendered useful service to the new police posts that were established in Coronation Gulf.

609 The news that white men were wintering in their country not eighty miles away caused a great commo- 609 tion among the villagers. They anticipated a renewal 437 of their profitable trade with Captain Bernard four years before, and hastily prepared to migrate en 492 masse to Bernard Harbour. Before dawn a long file 489 of sleds, laden five and six feet high with the family possessions, streamed slowly over the snow in the direction of Locker Point. Wives and daughters pulled in front of the dogs, urging them on with frequent cries; fathers and sons hauled behind them, giving added encouragement with their walking-sticks. Here an old woman staggered feebly along, clutching the sled for support; there a dog running loose dragged an old man [854] at the end of its trace. A nine-months-old baby slept peacefully on top of a load, enveloped in a caribou skin to protect it from the wind. Far in the rear came Knife's big sled, loaded to its full capacity, and trailing a smaller sled laden almost as heavily. Wealth has its disadvantages in the Arctic also; Knife could hardly

29: Jenness E-5 (1914-1916) 1959
ND8 Copper Eskimo ND8

CHAPTER XI

THE SECOND WINTER

AN unusually large crowd greeted me as I drove my team to the station door, yet of the scientific staff of six the only representative was Johansen. Anderson, Chipman, O'Neill, and Cox were expected daily; they had gone east during the summer, and lingered too late to return except by sled. Two men were strangers, Corporal Bruce, of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police, who had been commissioned to investigate the mysterious disappearance of the Roman Catholic priests from the Dismal Lakes two years before, and Girling, a young Anglican missionary, whose schooner had been blown ashore a hundred miles west of Bernard Harbour. Among half

29: Jenness E-5 (1914-1916) 1959
ND8 Copper Eskimo ND8

761 deprived him of further pleasures, it also released him from manifold pains. So the Eskimos conceived no harm either to themselves or to the babe in quenching its new-born life, whenever that life seemed destined to bring only hardship and distress.

858 168 Life was sweet, nevertheless, and the natives did not desire the suicide of their race. They needed children for their own happiness, to satisfy the instinct for parenthood and to support their declining years; but they needed no more than would maintain their number at an even level. Many mouths were hard to feed; even with their number limited as at present people starved to death at intervals of a few years. To migrate elsewhere was useless, for no country between the four pillars that held up the sky abounded more 224 in fish and game than their own. The best hunter could hardly raise more than three children, unless indeed he was fortunate enough to secure a rifle and ammunition from the white men, and thereby increase his kill of caribou and seal. Perhaps, if they all possessed rifles, they could allow their families to increase. But with only harpoons for seals, and only bows and arrows for caribou, how could they possibly provide for every child that, wanted or unwanted, now came into the light of day?

797 Girling, the missionary, arrived at the station early in February. This was his first winter in the country

29: Jenness E-5 (1914-1916) 1959
ND8 Copper Eskimo ND8

where he had undertaken to remain five years; and of the Eskimos and their customs he knew nothing. Although he had brought a Christian Eskimo from Alaska as interpreter he realized that he could accomplish little until he himself learned the language and understood the thoughts of the people. The interpreter was faithful and diligent, but unable to distinguish the essentials of Christianity from its trappings, so that his zeal sometimes outran his master's wishes. On his first Sunday at the Liston and Sutton Islands, before he was even acquainted with the people, he prohibited all sealing and sewing; consequently Ice-house objected to stitching a small rent in my mitten, saying that their own medicine-men often prohibited sewing when danger threatened, and that surely I did not wish to expose her to grave peril at the hands of some unknown but malignant power. I have no doubt that Girling believed in the proper observance of one day in seven, but it was not the first instruction he would have given to natives ignorant of a Supreme Deity, and with no word in their language for any number above six. A missionary should walk warily and circumspectly; before all else he should gain the confidence of his people, learn to speak their tongue, and understand the problems of their daily life. Girling had already begun this task. He was studying the language in every spare moment, and he visited with

797 • [784]

29: Jenness E-5 (1914-1916) 1959
ND8 Copper Eskimo ND8

me all the natives who frequented Dolphin and Union Strait. Now, to extend his observations, he asked that he might accompany me on a trip to the eastward, where I proposed to make a reconnaissance of all the tribes from the Coppermine River to Kent Peninsula.

29: Jenness E-5 (1914-1916) 1959
ND8 Copper Eskimo ND8

there were mitigating circumstances that pleaded in his favour. We were foreigners in their land, beings partly of another world, who were blessed with many wonderful things that the Eskimos lacked. Though kindly enough after our own peculiar fashion, we neither observed their customs concerning the sharing of food with neighbours, nor assumed the other obligations of their semi-communistic life. If we thus claimed exemption from the only social code they knew, could we fairly expect them to observe their moral code toward us, and regard our property as inviolate? It speaks highly of their character that nearly all of them did observe it, and not only dealt with us honestly, but reproved those of their countrymen who deviated from the accepted path. We had come to this camp prepared for serious trouble, but the goodwill of its inhabitants, prudently directed by the old man, relieved the situation of all danger.

Spring was now fast advancing, the surface of the snow was beginning to thaw under the noon sun, and the night was almost as bright as the day. Girling considered that it was time for him to go back to his vessel a hundred and fifty miles to the west, that he might sail into Bernard Harbour and establish his mission there as soon as the ice broke up in the strait. I offered to escort him, since the interpreter and dog-team he had brought to our station during the winter had long since returned. The trip would be only a